

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Planning Commission

January 20, 2015 @ 6pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Rick Trombley opened up the meeting @ 6:04pm .

Present were: Planning Commission Board Members; Rick Trombley, Woody Rouse, Luc Dupuis, Larry Simmons.

Absent: Julie Rice and Bruce Ryan.

Also present were: Heidi Britch-Valenta – Planning & Zoning Administrator; Wendi Dusablon – Clerk; Catherine Dimitruk – NRPC.

II. ENHANCED CONSULTATION WITH NRPC

Rick made an amendment to the agenda to include NRPC for an enhanced consultation. Catherine Dimitruk was present from NRPC. State statutes require that NRPC consults with each municipality two times every five years. Part of that is to go over the town plan, and the other part is touching base on what the towns current needs are. This could include training needs, local needs, issues or priorities, as examples. They were last here in July 2012 for this presentation and discussed training needs and shoreline workshops. There is a training session tomorrow, Jan. 21st, which Rick and Larry will be attending. Our new bylaws are still in process, as we have a few public hearings yet to hold. The first will be at the Selectboard Meeting on Feb. 5th. NRPC would like to touch base with us in a year or so from adoption of the bylaws to see how they are working. Catherine asked about our priorities and impending future plans. The following ideas were put out there, which Catherine made notes of;

- Lamkin Street corridor
- Village Center status
- Sidewalks
- Finance Committee
- Economic Development Group
- Emergency Management Coordinator
- Flood sensitivity overlay map
- Sensitive soil overlay map

Catherine thought this was a great list and they are always working to develop trainings with neighboring NRPC's. There will be a workshop coming up for elected and appointed board members on fiduciary responsibilities. For example, should the person signing checks be the same person opening bank statements? It is basic training, but important. In the spring, NRPC will be hosting a conversation among municipalities to talk about opportunities regarding shared services. Consolidating services could mean gained efficiency and sometimes cost savings also. It will be an open conversation / forum. NRPC continues to work on water quality issues, TMDL requirements for road practices, development practices and a host of other things. Lastly, Catherine mentioned that they will be finishing up the draft regional plan. Within

the next month or two a copy of the draft should be out to towns for review. They will also be working on evaluating the region for the best sites for specific types of energy projects. Each town would get a report. The goal is to incorporate this into the regional plan. Heidi feels that Highgate is behind other towns with regard to renewable energy projects. Catherine noted that we are represented on the NRPC board by Richard Noel. Tom Racine has asked to be replaced on that board and we have not found a replacement. This board usually meets 9 times per year. Rick and Larry had some questions with regard to county government vs. town government. We do not practice county government in Vermont. Larry can see where consolidation of emergency management might work, to have a regional coordinator for the county and perhaps a singular warehouse to store the necessary items. The conversation continued regarding county vs. town government and if that would add value or add another complicated layer. Larry said that here in VT you can put a face to an issue, where in places like NJ, where it is county government, you can't. Catherine left a copy of chapter 7 of the town plan "community facilities and services" for everyone to review.

III. OTHER BUSINESS

- **Letter of support ~ cell tower**

There were no concerns from the Planning Commission regarding the presentation in December for the proposed telecommunications tower at the Highgate Arena site. Motion by Rick Trombley to send a letter of support for the cell tower project. Motion was seconded by Woody Rouse – **APPROVED**. The board noted their reasons for supporting it, which included; improved communication in Highgate, revenue for the town; and based on the presentation and feedback they have received from the public. Heidi shared a letter of support that was received from NRPC on this project also.

- **Letter to the Selectboard ~ increase in meeting stipend**

For budgeting purposes, the Selectboard needs to know what the PC and DRB will be asking for with regard to their meeting stipend. It is currently \$15 per meeting, and has been for several years. The intent of the stipend is not to view it as a salary, but to cover expenses such as gas or a babysitter to attend meetings each month. Rick asked if an increase in stipend would still jive with the permit prices, which were just increased in July 2014. Heidi noted that permit fees can be increased whenever the boards see fit. The discussion continued, with the board deciding to ask for a \$20 stipend per meeting for 2015. Motion by Rick Trombley to send a letter to the Highgate Selectboard asking for an increase in their meeting stipend for the PC and DRB to \$20 per meeting. It is believed that the recent changes to the permit fees will support this increase. Motion was seconded by Luc Dupuis – **APPROVED**.

- **2014 Town Report submission from PC**

Wendi supplied the PC with a copy of what they submitted to the town report last year. Rick noted that we are down one member on the PC and asked for any ideas for new members. Heidi noted we have two open Selectboard seats on the ballot this year in March. It was also noted that there may be some changes with internal auditors so that may open up some candidates, Steve Scott was mentioned specifically. Rick also asked if Henry Rainville would be interested. In 2014 the PC was busy with the bylaw re-write, capital budget, town plan, sensitive soil map, airport overlay map and more. Rick will start working on the 2014 town report submission soon and get it to Wendi. We are going to print in early February.

- **Approval of minutes from 12-16-2014**

Motion by Rick Trombley to approve the minutes from December 16, 2014, as amended. Motion was seconded by Woody Rouse – **APPROVED**.

IV **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- Jan. 26 by 5pm petitions & consent of candidate forms for elected office
- Feb. 5 7pm Selectboard Mtg.
- Feb. 12 6pm DRB Mtg.
- Mar. 3 10am Town Meeting @ Highgate Elem.
- Mar. 3 7am-7pm Polls open at Highgate Elem.
- Mar. 14 10am-noon Rabies shot clinic @ fire station

Heidi noted that Scott Martin has expressed interest in being an alternate on the DRB. We will invite him to the next DRB meeting.

FYI – we have been sent a wetland permit for posting regarding Daniel Brosseau. It will be posted through January 21st, as per the instructions. The instructions also asked that the PC was notified, so a copy is included in their packets. Rick asked if Mr. Brosseau needs the wetland permit to proceed. Heidi said, yes, but that the DRB should not hold up an application pending state permits, and that Mr. Brosseau will ultimately need that permit from the state.

Heidi reminded the PC that the first public hearing on the bylaw adoption will be at the Selectboard meeting on Feb. 5th @ 7pm and ideally someone from the PC should be there. Rick will attend if he is in town.

Heidi also noted that the hiring committee is working towards hiring a construction manager for the arena project.

IV. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Rick Trombley to adjourn the meeting @ 7:10pm. Motion was seconded by Woody Rouse – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

_____, Planning & Zoning Clerk _____
Wendi Dusablon Date

Minutes approved by:

_____, DRB, Chair _____
Richard Trombley Date